

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BONN 20076 01 OF 02 051159Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 PM-05 ISO-00 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 H-01 INR-07
IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 OIC-02 OMB-01 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 /076 W
-----055885 051204Z /10

O P 051030Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3689
INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY
USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY
CINC EUR VAIHINGEN
CINC USAREUR HEIDELBERG

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 20076

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, MPOL, MILI, PINT, GW, US
SUBJECT: DANIEL ELLSBERG ALLEGATIONS THAT U.S.
PRESIDENTS HAVE DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO
USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS

REFERENCE: BONN 19232 DTG 181654Z NOV 77

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE DEFENSE MINISTRY (FMOD) HAS REQUESTED A FORMAL U.S. STATEMENT ON ALLEGATIONS BY DANIEL ELLSBERG THAT PAST U.S. PRESIDENTS HAVE DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS. THE FMOD ALSO REQUESTS THAT THE STATEMENT REAFFIRM THAT, UNDER PRESENT POLICY, THERE CAN BE NO NUCLEAR USE OF ANY KIND WITHOUT PRIOR PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL. THE STATEMENT IS NEEDED TO RESPOND TO A QUESTION FROM A BUNDESTAG MEMBER (VOIGT) WHO IS AN ARDENT OPPONENT OF THE NEUTRON WEAPON AND WITH WHOM MINISTER LEBER IS ON POOR TERMS. END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BONN 20076 01 OF 02 051159Z

1. ON DECEMBER 2, COLONEL HANSEN OF THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S OFFICE OF POLITICAL/MILITARY AFFAIRS TOLD EMBOFF THAT BUNDESTAG MEMBER KARSTEN VOIGT (SPD) HAD ASKED THE FMOD TO DETERMINE WHETHER THERE WAS ANY TRUTH TO STATEMENTS BY DANIEL ELLSBERG (REPORTED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES ON NOVEMBER 4) THAT PRESIDENTS EISENHOWER, KENNEDY AND JOHNSON HAD DELEGATED TO THEIR TOP MILITARY

COMMANDERS THE AUTHORITY TO USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS UNDER SPECIFIC CONTINGENCIES, SUCH AS COMMUNICATIONS BLACKOUT. ELLSBERG IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT AMONG THOSE WHO HELD SUCH DELEGATED AUTHORITY WERE THE PACIFIC COMMANDER, THE COMMANDER OF THE STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND IN OMAHA, AND THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER IN EUROPE. ELLSBERG REPORTEDLY SAID: "I WONDER IF PRESIDENT CARTER KNOWS WHETHER HIS GENERALS HAVE THAT AUTHORITY." ELLSBERG IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT, IN THE PAST, DELEGATED AUTHORITY FOR NUCLEAR USE "FILTERED DOWN" FROM "SIX OR SEVEN THREE AND FOUR STAR GENERALS" TO OFFICERS RANKING AS LOW AS MAJOR.

2. COLONEL HANSEN REQUESTED THAT THE EMBASSY PROVIDE THE DEFENSE MINISTRY WITH AN AUTHORITATIVE US STATEMENT ON THE SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS BY ELLSBERG AS REPORTED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE. HE REQUESTED THAT OUR STATEMENT ADDRESS ITSELF UNAMBIGUOUSLY TO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT A US PRESIDENT HAS EVER GIVEN ANY KIND OF CONTINGENCY AUTHORITY TO ANY SUBORDINATE FOR THE USE OF ANY TYPE OF NUCLEAR WEAPON. HANSEN ASKED THAT OUR STATEMENT ALSO RECONFIRM THAT, UNDER PRESENT POLICY, NO NUCLEAR USE OF ANY KIND IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT PRIOR PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL. HANSEN SAID THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE IS INTERESTED IN BEING ABLE TO RESPOND TO VOIGT AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE IN THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 5-9.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BONN 20076 01 OF 02 051159Z

3. COMMENT: THERE IS CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL ANIMOSITY BETWEEN VOIGT AND MINISTER LEBER. ALTHOUGH THEY ARE BOTH FROM THE SPD, THEY HAVE BEEN POLITICAL RIVALS IN THE ELECTION DISTRICT (FRANKFURT) FROM WHICH THEY BOTH COME. IN 1976, LEBER CHOSE TO RUN ON THE LAND (HESSE) ELECTION LIST RATHER THAN AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF HIS ELECTION DISTRICT BECAUSE THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT VOIGT WOULD DEFEAT HIM THERE. VOIGT WENT ON TO BE ELECTED FROM THE DISTRICT AND LEBER WAS ELECTED ON THE LAND HESSE LIST. VOIGT IS A MEMBER OF THE LEFT-WING OF THE SPD AND A FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS. HE THUS HAS A VERY DIFFERENT POLITICAL OUTLOOK FROM THE RELATIVELY CONSERVATIVE LEBER.

4. DURING THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE NEUTRON WEAPON AT THE NOVEMBER 15-19 SPD CONVENTION IN HAMBURG, VOIGT TOOK A STRONG ANTI-NEUTRON WEAPON STANCE. HE WAS ONE OF THOSE BEHIND AN UNSUCCESSFUL MOVEMENT TO INSERT INTO THE SPD RESOLUTION ON THIS WEAPON WORDING WHICH WOULD HAVE CALLED ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO "GUARANTEE" THAT THE WARHEAD WOULD NOT BE STORED IN THE FEDERAL

REPUBLIC (SEE REFTEL). IN SPEAKING AGAINST THE WARHEAD
AT THE PARTY CONVENTION, VOIGT SAID THAT IT HAD "BECOME

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BONN 20076 02 OF 02 051147Z
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NSAE-00 OIC-02 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-05 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
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O P 051030Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3690
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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 20076

KNOWN" THROUGH A NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE (HE DID NOT
MENTION ELLSBERG) THAT PREVIOUS US PRESIDENTS HAD
DELEGATED THE AUTHORITY TO USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS, "EVEN
LARGER ATOMIC WEAPONS," TO CERTAIN GENERALS, "INCLUDING,
FOR EXAMPLE, GENERALS IN EUROPE." HE WENT ON TO SAY
THAT SUCH DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY WAS ALL THE MORE
LIKELY IN THE CASE OF TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS, E.G.,
THE NEUTRON WARHEAD. HE DECLARED: "...
ESPECIALLY IN TIMES OF MOUNTING CRISIS THERE IS THE
DANGER THAT THEY (TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS) WILL BE
USED, OR COULD BE USED, AT A VERY EARLY POINT IN TIME,
PRACTICALLY WITHOUT POLITICAL CONTROL."

5. MINISTER LEBER, SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO VOIGT IN A
SUBSEQUENT INTERVENTION AT THE SAME PARTY CONVENTION,
SAID IT WAS "SIMPLY UNTRUE" THAT THERE WAS ANY DANGER
OF THE AUTHORITY FOR NUCLEAR USE BEING DELEGATED IN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BONN 20076 02 OF 02 051147Z

EUROPE. HE SAID: "NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE POLITICAL WEAPONS. THE POWER TO USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS DOES NOT LIE IN THE HANDS OF THE MILITARY AND MUST NEVER BE GIVEN INTO MILITARY HANDS, BUT THESE WEAPONS MUST REMAIN UNDER THE CONTROL OF POLITICIANS. THIS IS ALSO TRUE FOR THE NEUTRON WEAPONS."

6. VOIGT APPARENTLY REMAINS UNCONVINCED BY LEBER'S ASSURANCES, AND HE WANTS ABSOLUTE CONFIRMATION THAT THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY DELEGATION OF NUCLEAR USE AUTHORITY IN THE PAST. HENCE HIS REQUEST TO THE DEFENSE MINISTRY AND THEIR REQUEST TO US.

7. PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE BACKGROUND TO VOIGT'S REQUEST, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF THE EMBASSY COULD BE AUTHORIZED, ON AN URGENT BASIS, TO MAKE A STATEMENT TO THE DEFENSE MINISTRY WHICH WOULD (A) DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE ALLEGED ELLSBERG STATEMENTS AND (B) ENABLE THE FMOD TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO VOIGT'S INQUIRY.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: GUIDANCE ON HOW TO RESPOND TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE.

STOESSEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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TAGS: MNUC, MPOL, MILI, PINT, GE, US
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vdkgvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/bce8430c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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